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TAGS: [CASC](#) [EAIR](#) [ECON](#) [EINV](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BF](#)
SUBJECT: PM'S OFFICE FOCUSED ON TRAVEL, PORT SECURITY,
INVESTMENT

REF: A. 07 NASSAU 940
[1](#)B. 07 NASSAU 610

Classified By: DCM Zuniga-Brown for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The Prime Minister's Permanent Secretary focused on domestic issues that impact the tourism sector, the bedrock of the national economy, such as consular and travel issues, air and seaport security, and U.S. investment during a wide-ranging discussion with DCM September 15. They gave no indication of imminent approval of the long-stalled Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal project, however. DCM underlined USG desire to learn concrete GCOB priorities for the hurricane-damaged OPBAT base at Great Inagua, but the Permanent Secretary deferred to other agencies. END SUMMARY.

INVESTMENT KEY, BUT NOT LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS (LNG) TERMINAL

[1](#)2. (C) Permanent Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, David Davis, and Director of the Bahamas Investment Authority, Joy Jibrilu, presented the top GCOB priorities to DCM during an initial courtesy call September 15. PS Davis clarified that his Office covered issues of special national interest, such as foreign direct investment, mostly from the U.S. He said the GCOB looked to the Embassy to assist with conducting "due diligence" on potential projects, citing the long-planned yet unrealized project for an LNG terminal by the U.S. company AES. Davis said that despite strong USG encouragement the GCOB had not pursued the project due to lack of an adequate regulatory framework and local expertise. He left open the possibility of approval. COMMENT: More senior government officials, though, have privately expressed to the Ambassador that the project is "going nowhere" and expressed frustration that AES was still pressing its project. END COMMENT.

AVIATION AND SEA PORT SECURITY STRESSED

[1](#)3. (C) DCM mentioned an ongoing TSA inspection and restated serious USG concerns over security deficiencies at the Nassau airport, including basic access controls, such as inoperative door locks and card-readers. PS Davis referred to the inadequacy of personnel, rather than resources, as the source of the problem. "We have proven that we cannot run an airport," he said, explaining why an outside company was brought in to manage it. PS Davis also referred to plans for expansion of tourist attractions near the cruise ship port in downtown Nassau, and expressed desire to collaborate with the Embassy on adequate security arrangements. DCM agreed that seaport security was a critical consideration, both from the land and sea sides PS Davis also mentioned the GCOB's readiness for expansion of pre-clearance to general aviation by the end of 2008, and reiterated that the GCOB intended to work with the FAA, rather than Canadian contractors, on the Flight Information Region (FIR).

RAISING GREAT INAGUA

14. (C) DCM underlined USG desire to learn concrete GCOB priorities for the now hurricane-damaged OPBAT base at Great Inagua. PS Davis agreed that Great Inagua was a very high priority, offering that the GCOB planned to make it a "military island" with a large Defense Force presence. He noted that the USG had allocated resources for similar base and port improvements in the past, but that the GCOB had "lingered too long" and the plans had lapsed. But he deferred to the Ministry of National Security on specifics.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

15. (C) On multilateral affairs, DCM raised preparations for the Summit of the Americas, mentioned the Secretary,s September 25th meeting on the margins of the UNGA with CARICOM Ambassadors, and thanked the GCOB for past and asked for future support in voting on human rights resolutions at the UN. On the IOM deportee reintegration project, he cited the danger of the funding lapsing due to long delays. PS Davis only offered that the GCOB faced significant problems with "Haitian Bahamian" deportees who might claim but could not prove Bahamian citizenship. Finally, DCM stressed the U.S. view of the seriousness of the situation in Georgia. Officials did not comment on any of the issues raised, except to aver that the Prime Minister,s travel schedule did not allow him to meet with the Secretary on September 25. Deputy Prime Minister Symonette would attend the meeting in his

place.

TRAVELERS PERCEPTIONS AFFECT TOURIST ARRIVALS

16. (C) PS Davis identified last year,s rollout of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) and post-9/11 USG security measures as an area of past concern for the GCOB due to the real or perceived impact on tourism. He raised student travel to the U.S. and expressed surprise at the high costs and administrative difficulties associated with these visas. In reply, DCM highlighted the special advantages of having U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) pre-clearance facilities in Nassau and Freeport, and emphasized that students were given priority during the peak summer season as a matter of policy. PS Davis admitted that delays in processing new Bahamian e-passport applications also contributed to the traveling public,s difficulties.
ZUNIGA-BROWN